

WORSHIP IN THE MELTING POT<sup>1</sup>  
I - SPIRITUAL OR AESTHETIC WORSHIP?

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Introduction

A. Bible Exposition

1. John 4.24, “God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth”
2. Introduction
  - a. These are the words of Jesus spoken to the Samaritan woman at the well - Jesus spoke to her about true worship
  - b. She told Jesus that her ancestors worshipped in this mountain (Gerizim) and Jesus taught that in Jerusalem should all men worship
  - c. And Jesus said to her that the time is coming that men ought not to worship the Father in this mountain or at Jerusalem
    - (1) Rather, God the Father is seeking true worship which is in spirit and in truth
    - (2) The reason is because God is a Spirit
    - (3) Words of the text, “God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth”.
3. The teaching
  - a. There are 2 important aspects of true worship
    - (1) Worship according to spirit and worship according to truth
    - (2) These are not separate aspects that have nothing to do with each other but they are 2 aspects of the one true worship
    - (3) Both are essential ingredients to true worship
    - (4) The content of spiritual worship is according to truth
      - (a) The Word of God is the standard for our worship
      - (b) The Word of God is the content for our worship
  - b. What is spiritual worship
    - (1) What it is not
      - (a) It is not external worship
        - i) not ritualistic
        - ii) not outward
      - (b) It is not aesthetic or beauty
    - (2) What it is
      - (a) From the truth that God is Spirit
        - i) God is invisible (I Ti. 1.17)
        - ii) Israel did not see any form or body of God (Deut. 4.12-19)
        - iii) Thus, we make no representation of God, according to 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandment
          - a) “Thou shall not unto thee any graven image”

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Peter Master from the title of the same book

- b) QA96 “That we in no way make any image of God, nor worship Him in any other way than He has commanded us in His Word”
        - (b) Our worship must be spiritual, not carnal
        - (c) That our spirits are moved and directed by the Spirit of God
        - (d) Worship is of faith (He. 11.6), humility (James 5.10) and offered only in the way of repentance (Psa. 51.16, 17) which results in full of spiritual joy and is brought willingly and obediently
- B. What is Aesthetic Worship
1. The idea
    - a. The idea that things that are beautiful, artistic or skilfully executed should be offered up as an expression of worship
    - b. Based on the idea we worship not with spiritual from our minds and hearts, but also with creative skills of our minds and hands
  2. Elements
    - a. That genuine praise needs a physical dimension greater than unison singing
    - b. Assumes that God is a ‘aesthete’ - sitting in the heavens and looking down with appreciation and skill and beauty
- C. The Reformed Christian answer
1. This is totally opposed to the Saviour’s standards and is very essence of medieval Catholicism
    - a. “The church of Rome, with all her masses, images, processions, soaring naves, stained glass windows, costly and colourful robes, rich music, Gregorian chants ... All her theatricalism is an act of worship believed to be pleasing to God”
    - b. The Reformation turned back to the Bible and teaching that true worship is intelligent (and scriptural) words, whether said, thought or sung and winged by faith to the Lord
  2. Our music and its instruments only accompany the singing. It is secondary
    - a. Singing should be grand and glorious according in terms of fervour and effort
    - b. All unnecessary embellishment is an offence to him
      - (1) Because, he has not called for it
      - (2) An improvement that God has not laid down
      - (3) A powerful distraction to spiritual worship
      - (4) A musical entertainment (fanciful playing of instruments, including choirs in the church) to attract outsiders
      - (5) God as a satisfied view of a performance
      - (6) Expensive pianos and organs and musical instruments
  3. True worship is characterised in its simplicity, intelligibility and fidelity to the Bible
  4. Only one offering counts, the offering made once for all by the eternal Son of God on Calvary’s cross
  5. Worship the exercise of our hearts and minds
    - a. It is not the exercise of our gifts
    - b. Not a presentation to God of our skill or beauty or of personal gifts, but the communication of the soul with God, through the merits of Jesus Christ alone